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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/05/2016
TAGS: PREL PGOV UNSC MOPS CO EC
SUBJECT: AMB'S TOUR D'HORIZON WITH FM CARRION

REF: A. QUITO 02173
¶B. QUITO 02148

Classified By: PolOff Jarahn Hillsman for reasons 1.4 (B&D)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a one-on-one meeting with the Ambassador on September 7, FM Francisco Carrion said the UNSC decision is pending with President Palacio; relations with Colombia have been smoothed over after the recent errant mortar incident; shared his positive impressions of Bolivian FM David Choquehuanca's visit; implicitly confirmed rumored reasons behind MinDef Jarrin's surprise resignation; and lobbied for a positive USG signal on ATPDEA renewal and resumption of FTA negotiations. The Ambassador urged a vote in favor of Guatemala; congratulated Carrion for his cooperative relations with regional counterparts; and suggested the GOE take steps to improve the climate in Washington for ATPDEA renewal and the FTA. End Summary.

UNSC Issue to be Decided by Palacio

¶2. (C) The Ambassador highlighted the merits of Guatemala's bid for the United Nations Security Council and noted Venezuela's disruptive behavior in international fora. Carrion said he recently submitted a memorandum to President Palacio outlining the pros and cons of supporting either Guatemala or Venezuela. Carrion resisted revealing whether he had recommended a choice, saying only that the memo included mention of Ecuador's historic ties to Venezuela; and also Chavez's rash decision to leave the Community of Andean Nations, his failure to deliver on numerous bilateral promises to Ecuador, and his disruptive antics in international meetings. It was clear that Carrion has found it frustrating and difficult working with Palacio lately, and that this will be a personal decision taken by the President.

Colombia Mortar Incident Resolved

¶3. (C) Carrion told the Ambassador that the GOE was satisfied with the September 6 diplomatic note from Colombia. The note acknowledged that the mortar originated in Colombian territory and accepted responsibility for compensating Ecuadorian victims. It stopped short of clarifying whether it originated from the FARC or the Colombian military. Carrion said he had phoned Colombian FM Maria Araujo before the note was issued to stress the need to quickly resolve the issue in terms favorable to the victims. While he regretted the GOC's slow response, Carrion said that he considered the matter resolved (For more background, see Refs A and B).

Bolivian Foreign Minister

¶4. (C) Carrion said that Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca's visit to Ecuador on September 4-5 had been a positive one. He said the Bolivian FM was clearly new to diplomatic protocol, but that he found Choquehuanca to be intelligent and pragmatic. Choquehuanca complained about Chavez's precipitous departure from the Andean Community, making regional integration more difficult. Carrion said Choquehuanca had told him the GOB is interested in having good relations with the United States and that the visit by their VP to Washington had gone well.

Who Lost Jarrin?

¶5. (C) Carrion noted that former MinDef Jarrin's sudden resignation was a loss for Ecuador, adding that the two men were friends and shared a vision of the future for the country. Carrion initially claimed to be in the dark about the reasons behind the resignation. When the Ambassador said some believe former president Leon Febres Cordero might have forced the resignation based on energy sector economic interests, Carrion smiled and responded that "you are very well informed."

Final Press for ATPDEA

¶6. (C) Carrion highlighted GOE efforts to combat narcotics trafficking through Ecuador, which he believed justified ATPDEA extension. The Ambassador noted that ATPDEA is a congressional matter still under consideration adding that in Washington, ATPDEA is viewed more as a trade issue than about the counter-narcotics fight. Carrion said he was aware of this, but the Ecuadorian public was not. On the FTA, Carrion stressed the importance of returning to the negotiating table under the Palacio government, if only to force the next government to take up the issue quickly after taking office. The Ambassador asked if Palacio was truly committed to finish FTA talks. Carrion said yes.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador suggested the GOE focus on improving the climate for renewed FTA talks. Carrion said the GOE was working to get some commercial disputes resolved in a show of good faith, and said that he was ready to return to Washington to request renewal of FTA negotiations. The Ambassador said that such a visit would be more productive after concrete progress had been made on outstanding issues. Carrion said he was working to arrange a meeting with "less confrontational" business leaders and President Palacio, to repair relations strained by the pause in FTA negotiations.

Comment

¶8. (C) Carrion's evasiveness on the Venezuela/Guatemala UNSC recommendation and vague complaint about Palacio furthers our concerns that Palacio may be leaning toward Venezuela. Given the state of indecision here, a call from Washington or Guatemala City to Palacio could help persuade the President.
JEWELL